

# Redressing the gender gap

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# Valorization Addendum

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This addendum discusses the valorization opportunities presented within this doctoral dissertation. It complies with article 23 of the "Regulation governing the attainment of doctoral degrees" at Maastricht University, decreed by the resolution of the Board of Deans in 2013.

## Relevance

This dissertation addresses the effect that government-led conditional cash transfer programmes have on women's empowerment in three main areas – labour market participation, intra-household decision-making, and self-worth. The relevance of this topic stems from the fact that women are the largest vulnerable group on the planet due to the existing inequality in access to assets and resources. In the developing world, in particular, this inequality can have extreme outcomes, such as lower nourishment and literacy rates for girls, and an increasing mortality rate for women, especially during pregnancy and child-birth.

By extracting lessons learnt and policy recommendations from field work conducted by the author in Brazil and Mexico, this dissertation can have a two-fold relevance. First, it can have an economic effect by improving the efficiency of these poverty alleviation programmes. By knowing which features of the programmes work better and which ones can be improved, the cost-efficiency can be enhanced, and the financing and budgeting of these public policies can be improved. Second, it can have a social effect by improving the lives of the beneficiaries and their families. If the policy recommendations of this dissertation are implemented in policy-making, the programmes could have a better effect and women could maximise their benefits. By receiving educational talks and learning about how to use the CCT resources, about health and nutrition, and about their rights, women could improve the effect that receiving CCTs has on their and their families' lives.

If the monetary transfers are paired with access to knowledge, the empowerment level of women in extreme poverty could rise more than in contexts where transfers are given without information. This suggests that structural policies that provide economic support together with education can create the seed for an empowerment process and improved well-being for this very vulnerable population.

## **Target groups**

In addition to the academic community, the results of this research may be of interest to policy makers, governments, civil society organisations – national and international, and think-tanks which are involved in the design of public policies and welfare programmes for the poorest population. The policy recommendations derived from this research can be implemented by the aforementioned actors in order to design public policies or to improve existing policy interventions for poverty alleviation.

## **Products**

From this dissertation, three main products can be extracted. First, the interview guides for the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries could be used as guidelines for further qualitative research. Second, as a result from the field work, it is clear that educational talks should be implemented as a part of the design of conditional cash transfers programmes. This would make CCTs more efficient in their results by providing better tools for the beneficiary population. Third, the enhanced empowerment framework, specifically designed to evaluate empowerment processes in Chapter 6, can be used by policy makers to appraise the effect conditional cash transfer programmes are having in different countries or communities.

In general, this dissertation also discovered the processes of Personal Empowerment Awareness, Domestic Violence Awareness, and Parenting Empowerment, which can be used by the academia, think-tanks, and governments in order to evaluate the effect of CCTs on women's empowerment in the future.

## **Innovation**

The innovation presented with this dissertation consists in the in-depth qualitative research undertaken with both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of CCTs. In addition, this research was conducted in urban, semi-rural, and rural communities, providing a wide range of scenarios and showing how the effect of similar programmes can differ depending on the geographical area. Finally, by conducting a comparative case study research, similar CCTs could be analysed and their impact could be compared in order to extract best practices and to draw policy recommendations for other countries or organizations wanting to implement poverty reduction programmes with a gender approach.

## **Schedule & Implementation**

If the policy recommendations that this doctoral dissertation provides are followed, CCTs in Mexico and Brazil could include 1) access to education for the beneficiaries, 2) participation of the men in the programme, and 3) a link to productive opportunities or access to the labour market.

These changes in the structural social protection policies could make conditional cash transfer programmes more efficient and improve their cost-efficiency. The proposed plan for having the results of this dissertation disseminated widely is to provide the dissertation to the Ministry of Social Development in Mexico and to the Ministry for Social Development and to Combat Hunger in Brazil. Furthermore, to publish the essays in peer-reviewed journals directed to both academia and policy makers. In this way, the results may reach larger audiences.